

Beginnings and Endings

As a mother retires from Navy service, a daughter stands ready to follow in her footsteps.

By JO1 Amy Kirk
NRD Atlanta Public Affairs

Most mothers of little girls will tell you they have dreams of their daughters becoming a doctor, lawyer, the first female president, or, better still, a real-live princess. Ask almost any mom of a young girl and it is doubtful she will say she wants her daughter to grow up and join the Navy.

Although it may sound stereotypical, we envision mothers and daughters sharing make-up and fashion tips, recipes, and the secrets to getting tough stains out of laundry. We don't see them sharing a love of military service. But, if life teaches you one thing, it is that anything is possible. For Cmdr. Jackie Santisteban and Ensign Tanya Santisteban that possibility is very much a reality. This is their story.

In times of crisis, many of us hear a call to make a stand and help make the world a better place. For Jackie, who grew up in a farming community in Southern Minnesota, the call came during the era of the Vietnam War. While attending college and majoring in nursing she made a decision that she wanted to join the military and serve as a nurse in Vietnam.

By the time she graduated, however, the war was over. Yet, she still felt that need to serve her country and was convinced that joining the military was the right thing to do. She knew a few guys from her community had joined the military, but no women. Her family and friends discouraged her. Being a bit of a maverick she chose not listen to the naysayer's opinions.

On Jan. 4, 1974, Jackie stood in a snowbank in Minneapolis, Minn., and recited the Oath of Office as an officer in the United States Air Force. She attended Officer Indoctrination at Sheppard Air Force Base (AFB) in Wichita Falls, Texas and then went on to her first duty station at Lackland



Cmdr. Jackie Santisteban with her daughter, Ensign Tanya Santisteban, at Tanya's commissioning ceremony on May 26, 2006.

AFB in San Antonio where she served as a critical care and emergency services nurse. She was finally living her dream, but sometimes dreams take an odd turn.

Jackie was due to take orders to Aviano, Italy, but after her father had suffered severe heart attack she instead opted to be discharged and returned to Minnesota. In the years to come, she would marry and have three daughters. Still, she never felt comfortable with her decision to leave her military career. So, in 1988, this wife and

mother of three joined the Naval Reserve Nurse Corps. Since then, she has taken assignments with Fleet Hospital 23, Bremerton Naval Hospital, Jacksonville Naval Hospital, BUMED, Great Lakes Naval Hospital, and Rota, Spain.

She took a six month recall to active duty as a Medical Program Manager and another three month recall to active duty with the Joint Chiefs of Staff with a marketing project for Force Health Protection. She even volunteered to work in the clinic at NAS Bahrain



A role reversal. In 1974, it was Cmdr. Santisteban who recited the Oath of Office. Now, 32 years later, she serves as an Enlisting Officer and has the opportunity to commission her own daughter into the United States Navy.

during the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. She retired from military service Oct. 1, 2005.

As a mother was finishing her military career, there stood a proud daughter waiting in the wings hearing the same call to service.

Ensign Tanya Santisteban has known the Navy since she was 6 years old. When her mom went on active duty each year, her dad would bring her and her two sister girls out to visit as often as possible and that meant visiting several Navy bases. Nearly every family vacation also meant visiting the area Navy base if there was one close by.

Unlike her mother, as she was growing up Tanya was encouraged to think about a military career. After

graduating from Georgia State University with a degree in Communications and a minor in Business, she started looking at her career options. In 2004, she happened to be looking at a magazine that talked about the numerous career opportunities in the Navy and the light bulb went on. She realized that this is what she wanted to do.

Tanya visited the Supply School in Athens, Ga., the *USS Nimitz* in San Diego, spoke with Ensigns, Commanders and Admirals and started her paper work with the help of Chief Petty Officer Patrick Kingsbury of Navy Recruiting District Atlanta's Officer Programs Office. In February 2006, on a very memorable Valentine's Day in Atlanta, Ga., following in her mother's

footsteps, Tanya held up her hand and took the Oath of Office in the United States Navy.

Ensign Santisteban attended Officer Candidate School in Pensacola, Fla., and graduated on May 26. She will be assigned as a Supply Corps Officer after completing a six month Supply Corps School in Athens, Ga.

We can all imagine the pride a father must feel when he turns over the keys to the family business to his son. In this story, the same feeling of pride is there, but the father was a mother and the son a daughter and the family business the military. Although mother and daughter took different paths they will both tell you that the end result is exactly the same – the honor of serving their country in the United States Navy.